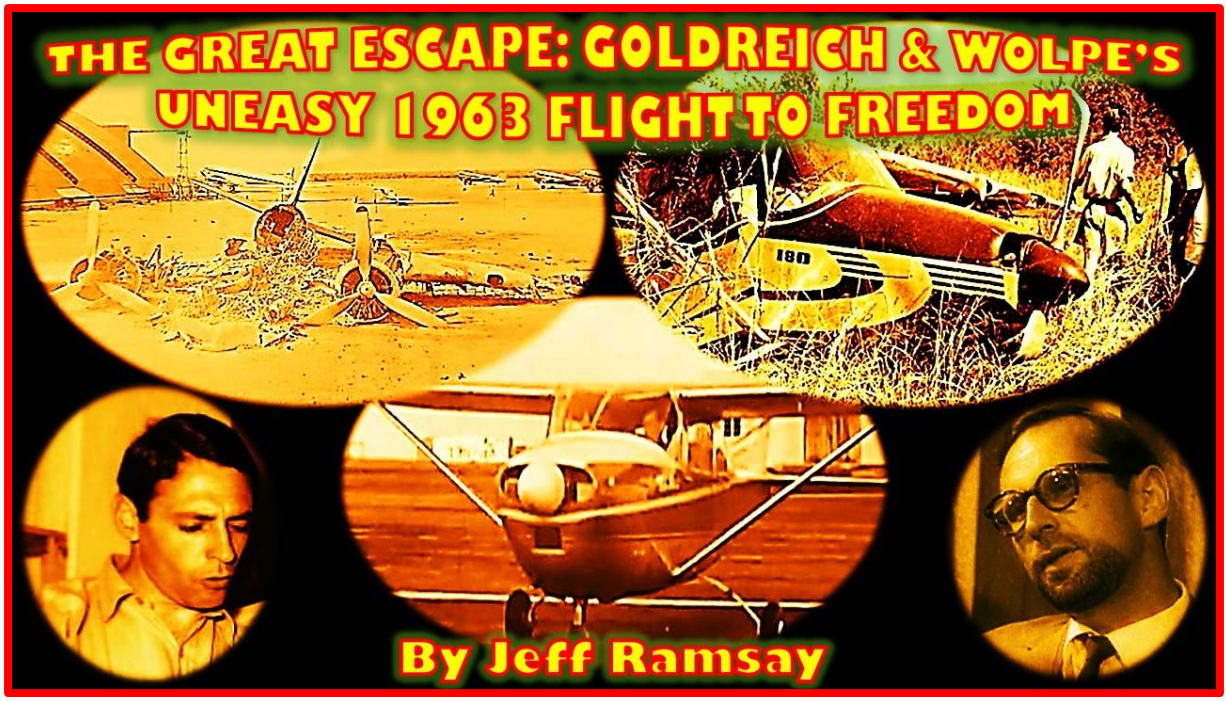


THE GREAT BECHUANALAND ESCAPE: GOLDREICH & WOLPE'S UNEASY 1963 FLIGHT TO FREEDOM by JEFF RAMSAY

The following text, edited for continuity, was originally published as a six-part "Back 4D Future" weekly series in the *Monitor* (Gaborone) newspaper between March 3 and May 18, 2020. The series was conceived as part of a Botswana Freedom Fighter's Pipeline trilogy that also included "Samora Machel's 1963 Passage through Botswana" and "Mandela's 1962 Movements in Botswana."

Prologue

On June 21, 1963, the first in a series of chartered East African Airways (EAA) DC3 departed from Francistown bound for Dar-es-Salaam, Tanganyika (Tanzania). The external wing of the African National Congress (ANC) paid for the flights. The inaugural flight's passenger list of "26 South African students" notably included two Frelimo Freedom Fighters from Mozambique, Samora Machel and Matias Mboa, as well as ANC associated cadres.

Also on board the flight were senior South African Communist Party (SACP) leaders Joe Slovo and Joseph "J.B." Marks, who had the good fortune to leave South Africa ahead of the July 11, 1963, police raid at Liliesleaf Farm in Rivonia. The raid resulted in the arrest of other senior members of the underground ANC led Congress Alliance. In the wake of the raid, there was a significant surge of ANC members fleeing into Botswana as a sanctuary and transit point to the external ANC headquarters in Tanganyika (Tanzania).

In response, between July and August of 1963, the ANC external wing chartered additional EAA flights from Francistown to evacuate their Freedom Fighters. However, the freedom flights came to an abrupt end early in the morning of August 29, 1963, when, still unknown, agent(s) blew up one of the EAA planes at Francistown Aerodrome.

Prominent among the destroyed plane's ticket holders were two of the Apartheid regime's then most wanted fugitives: Arthur Goldreich and Harold Wolpe. One of Southern Africa's greatest escape stories is how these two pioneer Umkonto we Sizwe (MK) stalwarts arrived in and left Botswana. The adventure began in the early hours of August 11, 1963, when Goldreich and Wolpe, along with comrades Moosa "Mosie" Moolla and Abdulhay "Charlie" Jassat, broke out of central Johannesburg's Marshall Square Police Station, where they and other political detainees were being held.

The Fugitives

Arthur Goldreich (1929-2011) and Harold Wolpe (1926-1996) were both born into Jewish families in Johannesburg. In 1948, Goldreich moved to Palestine, where he became a member of the elite 'Palmach' unit of Haganah, the main militia or military wing of the Jewish National Movement that fought to establish the State of Israel. He returned to South Africa in 1954, where he achieved public fame as an abstract painter and industrial designer while serving as an active member of the underground SACP as well as the Congress of Democrats. His political commitment and military background made him an invaluable founding member of the MK. In this capacity, he is credited with helping locate sabotage sites and drafting a disciplinary code for Freedom Fighters.

In 1952, Harold Wolpe earned an LLB from the University of the Witwatersrand in Johannesburg, where he was President of the Student Representative Council and a leading activist in the National Union of South African Students. As a member of the SACP, he prominently represented anti-apartheid figures in political cases in the 1950s and 1960s while emerging as a leader in coordinating anti-government actions by the SACP and ANC. In 1961, Goldreich and Wolpe worked together to buy Liliesleaf Farm in Rivonia as an underground headquarters for the Congress Alliance, i.e., the ANC, SACP, and MK. Both Goldreich and Wolpe were among the leadership arrested at Liliesleaf on July 11 1963 in what became known as the Rivonia Raid.

After joining the MK in 1961, Abdulhay Jassat (1934-) was arrested in April 1963 for his alleged role in acts of sabotage, including the blowing up a government detention house. While in custody, he was severely tortured, which resulted in permanent damage to his central nervous system.

Due to his role in the defiance campaign, Moosa Moolla (1934-2023) was one of the 156 original defendants charged in the 1956 Treason Trial of ANC Congress Alliance activists. Prior to his 90-day detention in 1963, he edited *Combat*, a bi-monthly periodical circulated by the Transvaal Indian Congress Youth League.

The Jailbreak

Following their arrest, Goldreich and Wolpe were incarcerated with other political prisoners waiting for trial at Marshall Square Police Station. Inside the station, the prison population was racially segregated as well as separated from one another. Despite this handicap, Goldreich and Wolpe were able to establish contact with fellow MK members Moolla, Jassat and Laloo Chiba, who were incarcerated in the Asian cells, and Abel Patrick Mthembu and Andrew Mashaba, who were in custody in the "Bantu" or black African cells.

As their discussions turned to escape plans, Mthembu showed disinterest. His reluctance raised justified suspicion. Moolla later recalled. ''He had been behaving strangely; he faced many years in prison, and we found this refusal fishy. I went back and told him that the plan was hare-brained, and we were calling it off." In 1978, Mthembu was killed by the MK as a suspected traitor

Marshall Square Police Station in 1963. From 1899-1968 it served as the principal headquarters for the South African Police in the Transvaal.

At first, the detainees tried to saw their way through their prison bars using 20 hacksaw blades that had been concealed in food brought by Harold's wife Ann-Marie Wolpe, but this effort proved to be ineffective.

Opportunity then appeared in the form of a friendly and corruptible 18-year-old police warden, Johan Greeff, whose cooperation was cautiously cultivated. Over the weeks, he became increasingly vulnerable as he was progressively bribed with such favours as tobacco, shoes, a suit and even car repairs after he had an accident.

When an aunt of Wolpe passed away, he was allowed to go to the funeral with a security police escort. This opening allowed Wolpe to secure MK's support for a bigger bribe. One evening, Moolla and Jassat invited Greeff into Moolla's cell, where they asked him to take an oath of secrecy on the bible before convincing him to agree to a payment of 2,000 rands to facilitate their escape. The money would allow Greeff to not only settle his debts but also purchase his dream car - a Studebaker Super Lark V8. Greeff would later recall:

"Jassat made the approach. He said they had helped me; now I might like to help them. I can see him trailing his finger on the wall - a pound mark and then a thousand - if I helped them to get out. That was R2,000. I said I couldn't. It was too dangerous.' Two days later, the offer was doubled. The Studebaker Lark was irresistible. Yes, it would be done on Saturday night, four days hence."

The car of Johan Greeff's dreams - 1963 Studebaker Super Lark R2 with an "Avanti Supercharged V8". In the same year, a driver was apprehended in South Africa after driving one at 237 kilometres an hour.

By the time of the planned breakout, Laloo had been released. He would be re-arrested in 1964, leading to eighteen years of imprisonment on Robbin Island. In the case of Matshaba, MK command and Greeff independently agreed that he would have to be left behind given the logistical constraints arising from the physical separation of the Bantu ward.

Early in the evening of August 10, 1963, Ann-Marie Wolpe arrived with her weekly basket of treats to be informed that the escape was on. A getaway car would thus be waiting outside at midnight. But, as the evening wore on, the detainees' fear of possible betrayal grew. Midnight passed without any sight of Greeff. Finally, after 1 am, he arrived, informing his clients that he had been delayed when a trio of unruly drunks had been brought into the charge office. He then let the detainees out through the gates, linking the exercise yard to the car park.

Finding their getaway vehicle gone and aware that the discovery of their disappearance was probably imminent, the fugitives divided themselves, with Goldreich and Wolpe heading for whites-only Hillbrow. At the same time, Moolla and Jassat made their way towards the Indian township of Ferreirasdorp. Each of the escapees had the same goal of reaching the relative safety of the Bechuanaland Protectorate (B.P.).

Goldreich and Wolpe soon had the good fortune of crossing paths with a friend and political sympathiser, Barney Simon, better remembered today for his career as a writer, playwright and founding director of Johannesburg's multi-racial Market Theatre. From Simon's house, the pair could contact their designated driver, Mannie Brown, who moved them to the first of a series of hideouts over the next eight days while the second stage of their escape was planned.

RAND Daily Mail

Police throw out huge net for key Rivonia raid figure

FOUR 90-DAY MEN ESCAPE

Goldreich flees after cell drama

SECURITY BRANCH QUESTION 2 WIVES

CHILD RISKS LIFE TO SAVE 3

GIRL OF 2 KILLED IN CAR SMASH

RAND Daily Mail

ESCAPE: POLICEMEN HELD

90-day men still at large; Mrs. Wolpe is freed

Threatened but not hit by police —Mrs. Wolpe

WHITES CHEER KENYATTA'S PROMISE

A bride's wait in vain

PETITION GOES TO VORSTER

Ship may be freed today

The Apartheid regime could hold political suspects for 90 days without charge. After 90 days, it was common for suspects to be released and immediately rearrested.

Greeff's role in the breakout was quickly discovered, resulting in his imprisonment for six years. The ANC finally honoured his payoff in 1994.

Passage to Bechuanaland

As news of the "Great Escape" spread across South Africa, a vast manhunt was set in motion, with the police focused on the recapture of Goldreich and Wolpe. At the time, the propagandists of the Apartheid regime were eager to characterise white Jewish communists such as Goldreich, Wolpe and Slovo, rather than the likes of Mandela, Sisulu and Tambo, as the true leaders of the banned Congress movement and its MK underground. In this respect, Goldreich, in particular, was portrayed as enemy number one, having been labelled as the principal author of “Operation Mayibuye”, copies of which had been seized at Liliesleaf. The actual standing and significance of the document, which was a draft blueprint for intensifying the MK's armed struggle, remains debatable.

Many in the MK had initially been reluctant to support the breakout, fearing that it was both risky and might overstretch the movement's manpower in the context of the Apartheid regime's still ongoing post-Liliesleaf raid crackdown. However, the jubilation in the townships, as well as the moral boost within the ranks of the Congress Alliance that was spread by both domestic and international media headlines of the "Great Escape", now made securing four fugitives' safe passage out of South Africa a top priority. At the time, the Hollywood World War II prison drama “The Great Escape” was a global blockbuster.

In the case of Jassat and Moolla, the notoriety of their white comrades proved to be something of a boon, as Jassat would later recall: 'The press made such a hullabaloo about the whites that we Indians could get about more comfortably.”

The two Indian comrades split up to ultimately find their separate ways into exile. Disguised as "a beautiful Punjabi woman wearing trousers, scarf, and lipstick," Jassat was successfully driven through multiple police roadblocks to Mahikeng. Thereafter, under the cover of darkness, he was able to sneak across the border into Bechuanaland. Seven weeks later, Moolla also made his way into B.P. However, his driver, Babla Salojee, was subsequently arrested; he later died while in police custody after "falling out of a seventh-floor window".

The thought of trying to smuggle Goldreich and Wolpe across the border in drag was also contemplated but ultimately rejected. Instead, it was decided that they both should be hidden in the boot of a quickly procured red Ford Fairlane, which was driven by a student for what must have been for its concealed passengers an uncomfortably claustrophobic six-hour ride to Swaziland (Eswatini).

Once across the Swazi border, Goldreich and Wolpe were hidden for several more days at St Michael's, an Anglican Mission high school for girls. Its supervisor, the Rev. Charles Hooper, had himself been forced to flee South Africa three years earlier in the aftermath of the Sharpsville Massacre. Having arranged a charter flight to Lobatse, Hooper had Goldreich and Wolpe disguised in clerical attire to assume the alias of English missionaries. The "Reverends Shippon and Mitchell" were thus flown in a single-engine Cessna across South Africa to Bechuanaland on August 27, 1963.

The flight itself was without incident. After dropping the pair off, the aeroplane immediately took flight, while two men dressed as priests were observed on the ground, oddly running towards the bush. This attracted the attention of the local police, who apprehended the pair.

Reception in Lobatse

Goldreich and Wolpe were brought before Special Branch Inspector John Sheppard, who was initially not amused at the pair's undocumented arrival or priestly appearance. He nonetheless quickly appreciated the sensitive nature of their presence. Sheppard was one of a small circle of British officials entrusted to discretely manage the pipeline of political refugees through Bechuanaland. Once Sheppard had processed Goldreich and Wolpe’s asylum request, he facilitated their same-day rendezvous with recently arrived MK activists Jack and Rica Hodgson, along with local ANC point man Fish Keitseng.

Keitseng recalled being in a store when Sheppard suddenly appeared, asking: 'Fish, do you know these two guys?'

Keitseng recognised Wolpe, who had served a decade earlier, along with Nelson Mandela, as his lawyer when he was arrested for his political activities in Newclare. He advised the two to continue with Sheppard to further process their asylum claims. At the time, the South-East District Commissioner, Police and Immigration offices were housed together. The then District Commissioner Bail was reportedly more upset that they had disguised themselves as priests than the fact that they had failed to declare themselves upon arrival. He reportedly observed: "This is a travesty, this is outrageous, this is blasphemy; how can you have dressed in the cloth of God, and why did you not come directly to me?"

In reply, Goldreich and Wolpe confirmed their true identities while pointing out that they had been on the run eluding Apartheid agents for the past two weeks. In their defence, they further cited the recent abduction of SWAPO members Dr Kenneth Abrahams, Hermanus Buekes, Andreas Shipanga and Paul Smit by plain cloths South African Police inside the Ghanzi District. Perhaps out of pride that he and his colleagues in the South-East ran a tight ship when it came to looking after political refugees, Bail is said to have been dismissive of the Abrahams comparison. He nonetheless reassured the two that their request for political asylum would be granted:

"I will give you asylum, but I want you out of the country as soon as possible. You will have to make arrangements yourselves and do so immediately. Nor are you to leave Lobatse without my permission. Before I get one of my men to take you to the hotel, you need to answer some questions."

Thus, Goldreich and Wolpe were escorted to the Special Branch office, where they answered a series of questions by Sheppard on what was, by this time, a standardised form that included their personal profiles, political affiliations, and further intentions.

A police sergeant then drove Goldreich and Wolpe to the Lobatse Hotel. Along the way, they met fellow Communist Party/MK comrade Jack Hodgson, who, with his wife Rica, had been staying in Lobatse for about two months while assisting Keitseng in the movement of Freedom Fighters through the Protectorate. A former member of Field Marshall Montgomery's Second World War "Desert Rats," Jack Hodgson was, like Goldreich, valued by the liberation movement for his experience in guerrilla warfare. After registering at the hotel under false identities, the pair went to a small farm that the Hodgsons had recently purchased to serve as an MK transit centre. There, other refugees joined them.

During the meeting, Keitseng was called away by news that seven more ANC had crossed the border near Otse. He would later recall:

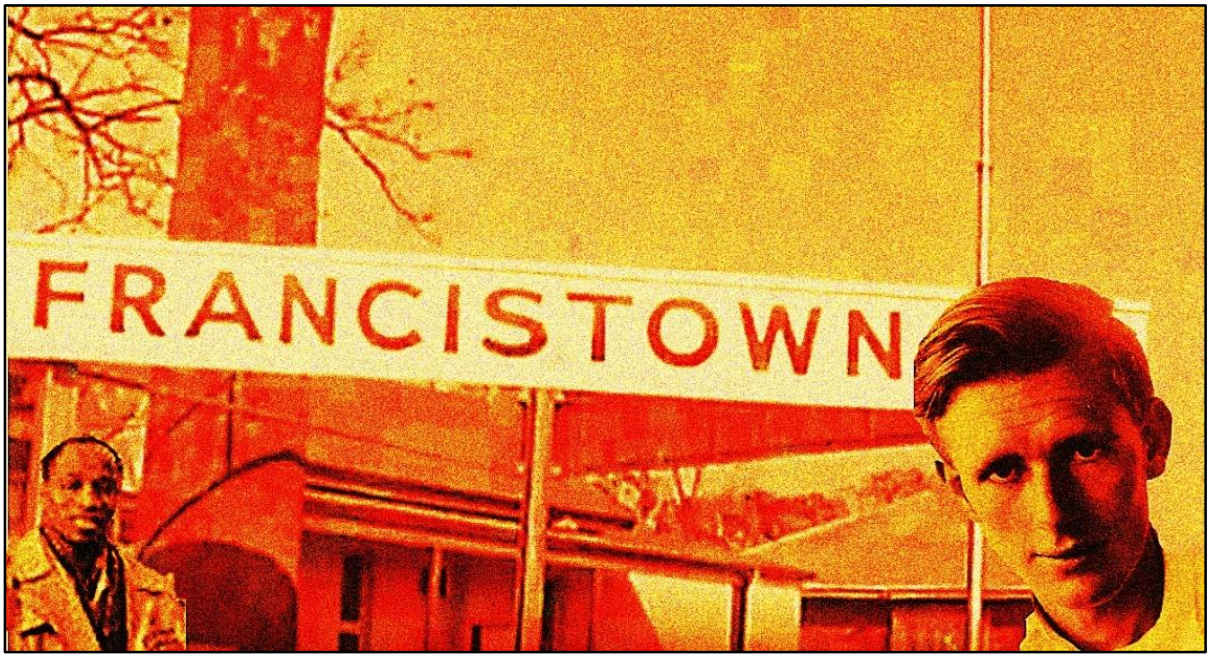
“So, I left these guys drinking tea [others would recall stronger stuff], and I went to collect these other seven by Otse Hill at Manyanalenong...I was calling through the trees, knowing that people were hiding there. Then I found Max Sisulu. I put him and the others in the Land Rover and took them to eat at my place.”

Keitseng then re-joined the Hodgsons, Goldreich, and Wolpe. It was quickly decided that it would be unsafe for the pair to remain in Lobatse. The news that the ANC had succeeded in chartering an EAA plane that would arrive in Francistown the following day further impelled them to depart early. Therefore, it was decided to depart for Francistown that night along with Max Sisulu, Ismail Bhanu, and the others. Simon Tladi was recruited to assist Keitseng with the all-night drive in the Landrover.

Frantic in Francistown

Upon arriving in Francistown the following day, Goldreich and Wolpe were taken to the house of the then-District Commissioner (DC), Phil Steenkamp, who was already known for his sympathy for refugees. Keitseng:

“We arrived at Francistown in the early morning and went straight to the house of Steenkamp, who was now the District Commissioner there. He arrived at the door in pyjamas— 'What is wrong, Fish?' Then I told him that I am bringing these guys. I left Wolpe and Goldreich there with Steenkamp. I also contacted Anderson Tshepe, who took in the seven Africans. I then went back to Lobatse, where I knew others would be arriving. At this time, people were jumping the border almost every day."



Francistown H.Q. 1963, in the corners Fish Keitseng and Phil Steenkamp.

Over early morning tea with toast, Steenkamp reassured Goldreich and Wolpe that he would do what he could to assist them while they remained in Francistown. The DC reportedly observed that:

"The place was crawling with journalists yesterday. There had been a rumour that the two of you had arrived in Francistown. The pack got fed up when there was no sign of you, and they all left. I think you will be fine at the local hotel. Nobody is around, and it might be better politically for you to not be staying with me. I might cause the British government some embarrassment."

Unfortunately, when the pair reached the Grand Hotel, their presence was quickly spotted by "what turned out to be a lone journalist from an Afrikaner newspaper – a man who they learned subsequently was thought to have close connections with the Security Police." Within an hour, the news that Goldreich and Wolpe were in Francistown, after all, was all over the radio and wire services.

Grand Hotel Francistown in 1963, from BBC coverage of Goldreich and Wolpe in Francistown.

By early evening, the Francistown Aerodrome had filled up with half dozen or so chartered planes, which had flown in with regional and international journalists. Knowing there was a risk of divulging sensitive information, Goldreich and Wolpe initially refused all press requests. Eventually, however, they relented and allowed at least two engagements. They spoke in confidence to Rand Daily Mail correspondent Allister Sparks, a friendly acquaintance whose reporting was already widely respected in the anti-Apartheid movement by then. He was also a man with whom they could trade insights.

They may have been mildly amused, as well as concerned, when they saw the Rand Daily Mail story in which their Eswatini enabler, the Rev. Charles Hooper, was reported to have "angrily claimed that he had been an unwitting dupe of Goldreich and Wolpe." In the article, he further claimed he had never seen the pair before their appearance at his doorstep, posing as clergy. Events would soon confirm that, having been connected by the media to the escape, Hooper had good reason to try to cover his tracks.

Dressed like this
Goldreich and Wolpe escaped

I WAS DUPED—PRIEST

Getaway planned by a 'mystery' organisation

IN a day of dramatic events stemming from the arrival in Bechuanaland of South African political refugees Arthur Goldreich and Harold Wolpe, there were these highlights:

- Goldreich admitted that there was a mystery organisation behind the escape.
- An angry priest announced that he had been the "unwitting dupe" of the escapers.
- Two diplomats of foreign countries spent two hours talking with the refugees at the Lobatsi home of Jack Hodgson, who also fled South Africa.

PARSON SAYS: A RUTHLESS OUTRAGE

By ANN CAVILL

GOLDREICH and Wolpe—on the run since escaping from Marshall Square on August 11—dressed and posed as clergymen and stayed with a missionary in Swaziland from last Friday.

Police net 'nowhere near us'

From ALLISTER SPARKS

FRANCISTOWN.—Arthur Goldreich, looking thin and haggard after his 16-day run from the South African Police, told me last night: "At no time did the police get anywhere near us. All those police statements about the net closing

Rev. Hooper's cover story.

In addition, they went on camera for the BBC. During the interview their response to most questions was, "I have nothing to say." Upon finishing with the BBC, fellow refugee Ismail Bhana arrived at the hotel to express his fears that their lives were in potential danger from both Apartheid agents and hostile members of the local white community.

Wolpe and Goldreich filmed inside the Grand Hotel in Francistown by the BBC.

It was decided that Bhana would join Goldreich and Wolpe in lockdown at the hotel for mutual safety. Meanwhile, other refugees were posted to guard the premises, keeping the press and potential troublemakers at bay.

Wolpe would later recall being woken in the early morning by an anxious man banging on his hotel window who reportedly shouted: “Your plane is burning up at the airport. It is hopeless. You’ll never be able to fly away.”

The guards were sceptical, thinking that perhaps the man was just an excitable troublemaker. However, by sunrise, the news of the complete destruction of East Africa Airway's DC Dakota plane VPKJT, which had been chartered to evacuate the pair and other political refugees to Dar-es-Salaam, was confirmed. As an immediate result, the Francistown Aerodrome was closed.

In a town now full of grounded journalists, the bombing was big news. Photos and film confirmed that the plane had been completely gutted, with only its tail and engines being clearly visible from the wreckage.

Wreckage of East Africa Airways DC Dakota VPKJT in aftermath of the August 29, 1963 bombing at Francistown Aerodrome.

For their safety, Steenkamp arranged for Goldreich and Wolpe to relocate from the risky comfort of the Grand Hotel to Francistown Prison. The opportunity to easily get out of Bechuanaland by air, which had been in their grasp at the time of their arrival, was now looking increasingly problematic. Fish Keitseng later recalled:

“When I arrived back in Francistown two days later with another fifteen or so refugees, I expected that Goldreich and Wolpe would have already left. But instead, I found them staying in the jail for their own protection as Steenkamp did not think they were safe outside. The South African police were watching. Goldreich and Wolpe were at the jail for several days. One plane that was supposed to fly them out was blown up by Boer agents. After that, it was hard finding a pilot who was willing to risk flying them."

Arthur Goldreich, Harold Wolpe and Ismail Bhana resting in Francistown Prison.

Before they departed from Lobatse, the Hodgson's had approached Captain Bartuane of Bechuanaland Safaris as a potential backup flight for Goldreich and Wolpe. But the man who had successfully flown Mandela and scores of other political refugees to safety considered transporting the two fugitives to be too risky and had ultimately refused the request.

Goldreich and Wolpe were thus pleasantly surprised when Nash, a pilot employed by Bartuane, appeared out of the blue to inform them that, in light of their predicament, his boss had reconsidered and was now willing to arrange their departure the following day.

The pair informed Steenkamp of the development. Eager for the two to be safely gone, the D.C is said to have been initially encouraged, but doubts quickly set in. On the morning of their anticipated departure, Nash was delayed. Wolpe decided to get in touch by phone with pilot's boss in Lobatse, Captain Bartuane, who bluntly informed him that: "I don't know anything about this arrangement".

Shortly thereafter, Steenkamp arrived at the prison to confirm the worst: "I've had a word with our intelligence that Nash has just flown in from Jan Smuts [now O.R. Tambo] Airport in Johannesburg."

Intelligence further confirmed that not only had Nash been offered £10,000 to fly Goldreich and Wolpe back to South Africa, but he had also been further enticed by the offer of a licence to set up his own air charter company.

With the world watching, in no small measure due to reporting by the BBC and Allister Sparks for the Rand Daily Mail, Goldreich and Wolpe had little option but to spend the next few days reading and playing cricket at the prison, while giving access to a few trusted individuals.

Wolpe at bat in Francistown prison September 1963.

Enter George Clay

One of those allowed to contact the pair was George Clay, a South African journalist who flew in from Dar-es-Salaam representing the American National Broadcasting Company (NBC) network. Clay brought with him his own get-out-of-jail plan. He told Goldreich and Wolpe that NBC was prepared to pay the cost of an aircraft to fly them out if they, in turn, agreed to give him an exclusive film interview.

With genuine fears that Apartheid agents could compromise even their prison sanctuary, Goldreich and Wolpe were increasingly desperate to find a way out. After Clay reassured them that they would not be expected to divulge any information that might put others or their movement at risk, they agreed to take up the NBC offer. Clay then arranged for a Dar-es-Salaam-based charter pilot named Tim Bally to fly down in a six-seater aircraft.

On the morning of September 6, 1963, Bally was approaching Mbeya airfield in Southern Tanganyika when one of his plane's two engines failed, forcing him to make a crash landing. While Bally was unhurt, the plane was extensively damaged. Within an hour of the crash, the news had reached Francistown. Goldreich and Wolpe were called to the warden's office, who reportedly informed them that: "We have been told by the Rand Daily Mail of the crash of the plane said to be coming here to fly the two of you out," further adding, "You two are obviously bad news."

While no proof of sabotage emerged from the incident, news accounts at the time noted that the civil aviation authorities in Nairobi had said that: "they had received a threatening cable on Wednesday night from Parkview, Johannesburg, warning that any aircraft ferrying from Francistown would be shot down or burnt on the ground." The cable signed "Bwana Ndge" [i.e. from Kiswahili 'ndege' meaning bird or aircraft] further threatened ", Please stop East Africa Airways interfering with our Communist criminals."

It now seemed that no commercial aviation company would risk evacuating Goldreich and Wolpe, but neither Clay nor Bally was prepared to give up. Working together with two Lusaka-based journalists, Oliver Carruthers and Dick Hall of the Northern Rhodesian [Zambia] Financial Mail, a new plan was conceived involving two planes, which would initially both land in Bulawayo, Southern Rhodesia (Zimbabwe). From Bulawayo, the first plane proceeded to Francistown with Clay and a film crew, while the second plane, piloted by Bally, remained behind, waiting for word that it was safe to fetch Goldreich and Wolpe.

Photo of George Clay, who was killed in the Congo in November 1964.

Final Flight

Finalising the new plan proved to be a team effort. Besides the need for proactive buy-in by members of the ANC underground, including Fish Keitseng, Ismail Bhana, Simon Tladi and Anderson Tshepe, it further required the quiet support and input of the local D.C., Steenkamp, and police chief Inspector Knight. At an initial planning meeting inside the prison, Clay observed:

"Once I told Bally that the passengers could not land in any of the countries making up the Central African Federation [i.e. Nyasaland (Malawi) and Northern and Southern Rhodesia] because of problems with the police there, he worked out a route. He said he could not fly over Northern Rhodesia without coming down to refuel, and we all know if the Rhodesian police got their hands on us, the two of you would be sent back to South Africa tout de suite. The distance is too great. He suggested the best way would be to fly to a small town just inside the Bechuanaland border, where he could refuel. It is a place called Kasane."

In response, Steenkamp observed: "We have got a forest ranger there, a thoroughly reliable man whom I could contact to make sure that he is around when the plane lands. But I will need to have some idea of the timing."

It was then agreed that Bally would fly the plane carrying Goldreich and Wolpe to Dar-es-Salaam, making necessary fuelling stops in Kasane, Elisabethville (Lubumbashi) in the Congo and Mbeya.

Steenkamp worked to secure their turnaround in Kasane, while Carruthers was tasked with using his connections to facilitate the Congo leg of the flight. In the meantime, Wolpe set about forging travel papers, which would be needed once they reached the Congo.

To further secure their escape plan from the ever-present eyes of Apartheid agents, it was decided that one plane would act as a decoy, taking off from Francistown, while Bally would fly from Bulawayo to the small airstrip at Palapye to pick up Goldreich and Wolpe.

Two vehicles were used as decoys as part of the subterfuge. Thus, on September 8, 1963, at about 4:00 a.m., under cover of darkness, an official-looking black car with Steenkamp at the wheel rushed out of Francistown Prison to the Aerodrome, carrying Bhana and Knight sitting in the back, who were standing in for Goldreich and Wolpe. The passengers were quickly bundled onto the decoy flight when the car reached the Aerodrome.

In an attempt to further confuse any watching Apartheid agents, a lorry driven by Tshepe had followed the car from the jail carrying seven ANC members.

"Fifteen minutes later," a third ANC vehicle with Rhodesian number plates left Francistown carrying Goldreich and Wolpe, who were kept safely out of view. During its journey to Palapye, one of Knight's police vehicles discretely shadowed it. The car made good time on the dirt road, reportedly arriving at Palapye at 6:30 am. There, an unidentified British official was present to facilitate their quick departure.

The fight to Kasane was uneventful, much to the relief of Bally, who, while in flight, had informed his passengers of a newspaper report that South African jets would target any aircraft carrying the two fugitives. On landing, however, Bally was disappointed to discover that the fuel on hand did not have the correct octane. Leaving his two passengers behind, he, therefore, proceeded to nearby Livingstone to refuel.

At midday, the plane finally departed from Kasane for Elizabethville, maintaining radio silence as it made its way across Northern Rhodesia. Greater tension was caused when the air traffic control at Elisabethville failed to properly communicate their location with Bally. With fuel running low and darkness approaching, the pilot was forced to rely on sight to locate his landing. This raised the alarm of potential sabotage among the passengers, but they encountered no further trouble once they were on the ground.

Rendezvousing with Clay, the party spent the night in Elisabethville. The following morning, Clay interviewed them for NBC before returning to the airport for the final leg of their journey. There, a cheering crowd of locals and representatives of the international press greeted them.

Goldreich and Wolpe arrived safely with Bally to a heroes' welcome in Dar-es-Salaam on September 10, 1963, finally completing their month-long great escape. There Abdulhay Jassat and Moosa Moolla would join them six days later.

Touchdown, Bally landing at Dar-es-Salaam airport with Goldreich and Wolpe.

Wolpe and Goldreich with supporters at Dar-es-Salaam

BIBLIOGRAPHY/SOURCES:

Botswana National Archives (BNA) in Gaborone:
BNA OP 33/1-40 Series on Refugee Movements, including:
BNA OP2 33/12 "Wolpe, Goldreich, Moola"
BNA OP 33/2 Airlift
BNA OP 33/3 Asylum Permits
BNA OP 33/24 "Refugee Policy"
BNA OP H 196/1-16 Immigration 1958-64
BNA OP2 25/8 1961-62 discussion for fugitive offenders' protocol with RSA.

U.K. National Archive, Kew (Public Record Office):
PRO FCO 141/17645: "Swaziland political refugees Arthur Goldreich and Harold Wolpe"
PRO CO 1048/591: "A Goldreich, H Wolpe, Moosa Moola, Abdulhay Jassat"

Benneyworth, G. "Bechuanaland's Aerial Pipeline: Intelligence and Counter Intelligence Operations against the South African Liberation Movements, 1960–1965" @ https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/02582473.2017.1398776

Dingake, M. *My Fight Against Apartheid* @ https://www.sahistory.org.za/archive/my-fight-against-apartheid-michael-dingake. Also Interview with Michael Dingake, Gaborone, Botswana, 18/12/2019

Haaretz (Israel) "The Anti-apartheid Fighter Who Turned Palestinian Ruins Into Jewish Tourist Sites" (August 20, 2018) @ https://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/2018-08-20/ty-article-magazine/the-anti-apartheid-fighter-who-turned-palestinian-ruins-into-jewish-tourist-sites/0000017f-f84a-d887-a7ff-f8eefb970000

Herbstein, D. "The smiling policeman: Not every Afrikaner in the apartheid security apparatus was a monster. More than 30 years ago, policeman Johan Greeff did 'the Movement' a favour. Now he may receive his reward", *Independent* (UK) July 16, 1994, @ https://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/the-smiling-policeman-not-every-afrikaner-in-the-apartheid-security-apparatus-was-a-monster-more-than-30-years-ago-policeman-johan-greeff-did-the-movement-a-favour-now-he-may-receive-his-reward-1414485.html

Hooper, C. "The Red Car" *Footprints* (May 2008) @ https://www.sahistory.org.za/sites/default/files/F21_RED%20CAR.pdf

Houston, G. “Military bases and camps of the liberation movement, 1961-1990 Report Democracy, Governance, and Service Delivery, Human Sciences Research Council (August 2013) @ https://www.ancpl.org.za/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/camps.pdf

Kumalo, V.R. “The Marshall Square Prison Escape: The Liliesleaf Farm Trust archive, politics of memory and the creation of historical archives” @ https://www.uj.ac.za/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/kumalo2021.pdf

Parsons, N "The pipeline: Botswana's reception of refugees" @ https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/02533950802078897

Ramsay, J. “Samora Machel’s 1963 Passage through Botswana” @ https://www.academia.edu/93782582/SAMORA_MACHEL_S_1963_PASSAGE_THROUGH_BOTSWANA_by_JEFF_RAMSAY

Ramsay, J. “Mandela’s 1962 Movements in Botswana” @ https://www.academia.edu/93725925/MANDELA_S_1962_MOVEMENTS_IN_BOTSWANA_by_Jeff_Ramsay

Ramsay, J & Morton, B. *Comrade Fish: Memories of a Motswana in the ANC Underground*. (Pula Press 1999) @ https://www.academia.edu/91437641/Comrade_Fish_Memories_of_a_Motswana_in_the_ANC_Underground_by_Fish_Keitseng_Compiled_by_Jeff_Ramsay_and_Barry_Morton_Original_1999_edition_

Reddy, E.S. *Whose Who Ca. 1940 – 1980 Biographical Notes on Indians in South Africa,* (a comprehensive if incomplete list of political activists) @ https://www.sahistory.org.za/sites/default/files/archive_files/Biographical_Notes_On_Indian_In_South_Africa_By_E_S__Reddy.pdf

South African History Online (SAHO) profiles:

Arthur Goldreich @ https://www.sahistory.org.za/people/arthur-goldreich
Abdulhay Jassat @ https://www.sahistory.org.za/people/abdulhay-jassat
Moosa Moolla @ http://www.sahistory.org.za/people/moosa-mosie-moolla
Harold Wolpe @ https://www.sahistory.org.za/people/harold-wolpe

Slovo, J. *Slovo An unfinished Autobiography* (Ocean Press, 1997) @ https://archive.org/details/slovounfinisheda00slov

Smith, T. "The Great Escape" Sunday Times (RSA), August 11, 2013 @ https://www.timeslive.co.za/sunday-times/lifestyle/2013-08-11-the-great-escape/

Time Magazine "South African Escape Artists", August 30, 1963 @ https://time.com/archive/6873802/south-africa-escape-artists/

Wolpe, A-M. *The Long Way Home* (Virago, 1994)